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COIN OF THE MONTH

## The Harbour God of Caesarea Maritima

by JOSEPH RINGEL
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The coins of Caesarea were studied by L. Kadman, who published his findings in 1957. In his work which is based on the examination of more than 2500 coins, he distinguishes 230 different types of coins, among them 57 on the reverse. Since the publication of his book, some variants came to light, two of which were published by Kadman and the others by A. Kindler, Y. Meshorer and A. Spiykerman and Starkey.

*Left: Classic Greek statue of Amazonian.*

*Right: Tyche holding human bust within temple, on bronze of Trajan (98-177 A.D.) struck at Caesarea, Kadman No. 22 (18 specimens known).*

The most important reverse types are those connected with Tyche. About one third of the entire coinage depicts Tyche, and she appears on the coins of 20 emperors and empresses of the 27 in whose names coins were struck in Caesarea. As is well known, every city had its own goddess of fortune, but each of them strove to give her some local characteristic feature. In Caesarea the goddess represents not only the Tyche of the city, but also Astarte, the Canannite goddess of fertility, who dominates the coinage of the Phoenician cities, too, particularly that of Sidon. Since Strato's Tower, the city which preceded Caesarea, was founded by one of the two (or three) kings of Sidon, who ruled in this city in the fourth century B.C., it is quite natural to find the cult of Astarte in Caesarea. At that time Astarte was quite different from the Canaanite prototype, i.e. a bird-faced naked woman holding both hands to her breast. She is already identified with the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite, or with the Roman Venus. However, while in the Phoenician cities Tyche is usually represented with her usual attributes (a turreted crown on her head, which marks her as protectress of the city walls, a cornucopiae in the left hand as bestower of blessings, and a rudder in her right hand as the pilot of destiny), in Caesarea, except in three cases, she is represented as a fighting Amazon, wearing a short chiton which leaves one of her breasts bare, a parazonium (a short sheathed ceremonial sword) at her waist, her right foot on the prow of a ship, she leans with her left hand on a cross-headed standard and holds in her outstretched right hand a human bust.

This type of Tyche is characteristic of the coinage of the cities of Palestine, on both sides of the Jordan River. It appears for the first time in Caesarea, in the 14th year of the reign of Nero, then under Hadrian in Aelia Capitolina and Tiberias, under Lucius Verus in Capitolias; under Commodus in Neapolis, Adraa and probably in Gaba, under Septimius Severus in Eleutheropolis, under Caracalla in Diospolis and under Elagabalus in Anthedon, Esbos and Madaba. Outside Palestine, this type occurs only in Cremma of Pisidia and not before the time of Aurelianus.

*City goddess Tyche holding bust on (left) coin of Caesarea under Hadrian, and (right) of Aelia Capitolina under M. Aurelius. Illustrations from Numismata Area Imperatorum by Vaillant (1708).*

*One cannot but help notice the seemingly swimming figure below Tyche on the coin of Caesarea. Ringel believes that this half figure "personifies still water, a lake or, what is more probable, a harbor, and that he is holding a fish to his breast.*

On the coins of Nero and Domitian, Tyche is represented standing alone, but since the time of Trajan she appears often in the company of Demeter and Dionysos. In the later coinage, beginning with the time of Alexander Severus her bust is also shown, but only on coins of small denominations.

It is not easy to determine the reason that induced the minting authority of Caesarea to choose the image of a fighting city goddess in the shape of an Amazon. Perhaps the goddess Rome, who is sometimes represented in amazonian dress, served as a model for the local coinage. But it is more probably that the cult of an amazonian type Astarte already existed in the Hellenistic city of Strato's Tower, which was inspired by representations of battles between Greeks and Amazons, so often shown on friezes of Temples and sarcophagi. Since originally this city was a fortified tower, as its name suggests, intended to protect navigation between Phoenicia and Egypt and surely also to protect the agriculture of the fertile plain of the Northern Sharon, a fighting tutelary goddess would have suited perfectly the character of Strato's Tower at its beginning.

As to the gesture of Tyche holding a human bust, this is attested in Roman art – in sculpture as well as in relief and gems. The famous sardonyx of Vienna shows Livia holding the bust of the deceased Augustus and contemplating it with sorrow and admiration. On a gem of Carthage, the genius of the city rests his right foot on the prow of a ship, leans with his outstretched right hand a human bust, just as on the coins of Caesarea. There is little doubt that in both cases the bust represents the reigning emperor.

# *The Menorah*

by Mel Wacks NLG

***One of the oldest known menorahs, made of stone with indentations in the upper part, probably to hold lamps. Found in synagogue remains near Tiberias. The design is reminiscent of the first menorah made for the Tabernacle, as instructed by the Lord:***

***"And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold . . .***
***his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops,***
***and his flowers, shall be of the same.***
***And six branches shall come out of the sides of it . . .***
***And in the candlestick shall be four bowls made like***
***unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers"***
***(Exodus 25:31–34)***

***All the components of the design – almonds, flowers and branches are reminders of the pre-Biblical "Tree of Life".***

The seven-branched Temple Menorah device found on the extremely rare small bronze coin of Antigonus Mattathias (40-37 B.C.) is unique in the history of ancient Judaean numismatics. No one else dared go against the Talmud's prohibition that one must not make a house like the Temple, or a table like the sacred table (of shewbread) in the Temple, or a menorah like that in the Temple, regardless of material. To avoid such limitations, one is permitted to depict a menorah with five, six or eight branches . . . but not with seven!

The Bible does not specify the actual dimensions of the Temple menorah; such estimates have been made largely on the representation on the Arch of Titus - 4½ feet tall, 3 feet wide at the spread of the outer arms, etc. The captured menorah's base, as depicted in the Roman bas relief, is embellished with animal figures . . . eagles and dragons of various kinds. For sometime it was doubted that such representations would actually been carved on the holy Temple menorah, however there are precedents. According to Josephus, the table of shewbread in the Temple stood on lion's feet, while the lavers of the sanctuary rested on bases adorned with eagles, lions and bulls in relief. And rabbinic writings indicate that pictorial representations of dragons whose "neck if smooth," precisely like those depicted on the menorah of Titus' Arch, are permitted.

The menorah representation far predates its use as a Jewish symbol. The Tree of Life was an integral part of many ancient religions. Indo-Iranian mythology contains the notion that gods live upon the fruit or juice of a miraculous tree that endows eternal life. This concept was carried over into early Greece where Heracles was believed to have gained eternal bliss by means of the golden apples of the Hesperides.

*Tree of Life on stone vase from Khafaje, Mesopotomia, from 3000 B.C.*

The Mesopotamians believed that the divine tree grew in paradise. In their ritual, the king was anointed with oil of the sacred tree, crowned with a wreath of its leaves and blossoms, and had a rod or sceptre of its branches. The Jewish rulers also were anointed with oil and were crowned with wreaths at their investiture. Likewise, Aaron's magical rod is said by rabbinic legend to have been "in the hand of every king of Israel until the Temple was destroyed, when it was hidden away, destined to be in the hand of the King Messiah."

As was stated at the beginning of this article, the Temple menorah was depicted only once on an ancient Judaean coin issued by the last ruler of Maccabean lineage, Antigonus Mattathias. He evidently used this important religious symbol as a rallying cry in his last desperate days in power, before his defeat in 40 A.D. at the hands of the Roman backed Herod the Great. Now, let's explore the transformation of the seven-branched menorah coin symbol to the seven-branched palm tree representation.

*Unique Menorah coin of Antigonus Mattathias. (Photo Enlarged)*

The palm tree design first appears on the bronze mites of the early Roman Procurators of Judaea, Coponius and Ambibulus (A.D. 5/6 - A.D. 10/11). This was not a distinctive seven-branched tree, but had 6, 7 or 8 branches. It probably was not related to the menorah. However, when the palm tree motif was utilized by Jewish minters, it did take on the characteristic of having only seven branches. Such is the case with the large bronze half (shekel?) issued in the fourth year of the First Revolt (A.D. 69/70). It closely resembles the symmetric tree that appeared on the bronze mites of the Procurator Felix (A.D. 58/59), but with a middle upright branch added to make a total of seven. The Romans used various numbers of branches on the palm trees depicted on the Judaea Capta coins issued after 70 A.D.

*Coponius*
*5/6 A.D.*

*Felix*
*58/59 A.D.*

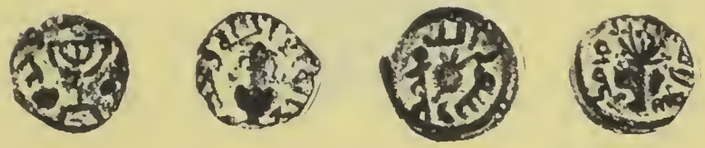
*First Revolt*
*69/70 A.D.*

*Judaea Capta*
*A.D. 71*

*Bar Kochba*
*134/135 A.D.*

When the Jews minted coins during the Second Revolt (132-135 A.D.) the distinctive seven-branched palm tree reappeared as the most common coin symbol on the small and medium bronze denominations. Considering that Bar Kochba's coin symbols generally pertain to the Temple and its holy ceremonial objects (e.g. Holy of Holies, lyre, trumpets, amphora, etc.) it is very reasonable that the otherwise forbidden representation of the menorah was signified by the "stand in" seven-branched palm tree.

The menorah made a surprising brief appearance on one of the early coins struck in Palestine by the Arabs (7th century A.D.) Though this menorah has only five branches it obviously refers to the Jewish Temple object, since other coins in this Arab series imitates the pomegranates, palm tree and amphora found on other earlier Jewish coins.

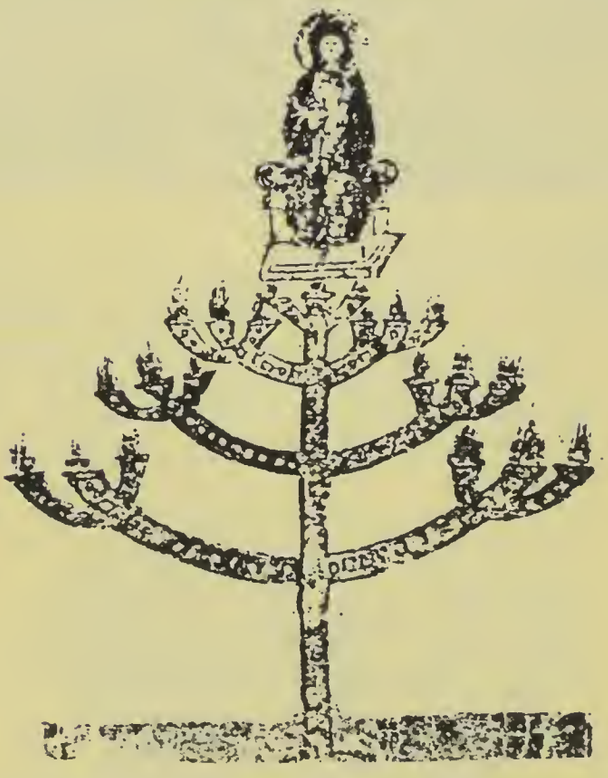


*Arab coins imitating Jewish numismatic motifs, probably struck in Jerusalem.*

Most recently, in 1948, with the reestablishment of the Jewish State of Israel the Temple Menorah (as depicted on the Arch of Titus) became the official coat of arms of the government. The seven-branched menorah appears on the face of every commemorative coin, as well as on the edge of all official government medals.

### Christian Symbolism

In early times, the menorah motif was sometimes combined with the cross such as found on inscriptions at Kissera (North Africa) and on some clay lamps from Gezer. It was again used on Syrian lamps during the sixth and seventh centuries . . . as a Christian symbol! There is an unusual medieval manuscript that pictures Mary crowned and enthroned at the top of a menorah. And then there is a controversial lamp from Carthage that shows Jesus with an inverted menorah at his feet. Goodenough ("Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period") feels that "the design shows that historically Judaism was the foundation of Christianity."



It is interesting to note that Christian royal sceptres have a similar derivation, and the cross on the orb symbolizes a Tree of Life growing at the center of the earth. Yarden ("The Tree of Light") continues by pointing out that "This identification of the cross with the Tree of Life or Christ himself - the 'shoot from the stump of Jesse' (Rom. 15:12) – became especially popular in medieval literature. It presumbably also lies behind the Christmas tree of later tradition. Similiarly, the usual decoration of the Christmas tree with candles, according to some reports was introduced by Martin Luther, is a feature which it shares with both the Life Tree and the menorah."

*Theodora holds a tree-like globus cruciger on this gold solidus of Byzantine emperor Michael III, A.D. 842-856. (Photo enlarged)*